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ABSTRACT

This book asserts that public assistance programs--particularly in countries in Western Europe--have been demonstrated to relieve deprivation and ensure an acceptable standard of living for those nations' families. Contrasting the extensive child welfare programs offered by France with those of the United States, this book describes in detail an array of benefits offered by the French government that are available to both high- and low-income families. The comparison shows how the French government runs nursery schools, guarantees medical care, and creates strong incentives for parents to seek and hold jobs rather than remain on welfare, allowing a single mother who chooses to work to continue to receive substantial income supplements, housing assistance, subsidized health care, and access to low-cost child care. This book describes how an American mother who chooses to work loses most of her cash benefits and receives no government assistance with child care, resulting in nearly one in four American children living below the poverty line--a proportion that exceeds that of any other advanced nation. The book is divided into three parts comparing differences in programs and spending in France and America, describing French programs for child well-being, and describing past and proposed American programs for children. Following a descriptive list of 30 statistical tables, the book contains 8 chapters: (1) "How Two Countries Respond to Children's Needs"; (2) "Differences in Spending and Program Design"; (3) "Government Child-Care Program Design"; (4) "French Payments To Raise Children's Living Standards"; (5) "Medical Services for Child Well-Being in France"; (6) "American Programs for Children: Keeping Millions Deprived"; (7) "Reducing Child Poverty by Helping Working Parents"; and (8) "Can We Conquer Child Poverty in America through Political Action?" Each chapter contains extensive notes and references. (AMC)